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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000185

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/04/2018  
TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: BIL'IN VILLAGE: BARRIER NOT YET REROUTED

REF: A. 2007 JERUSALEM 1905  
[1](#)B. 2007 JERUSALEM 4270  
[1](#)C. 2007 TEL AVIV 2670  
[1](#)D. 2007 TEL AVIV 2715

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Thomas Duffy, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. On January 24, Abdallah Abu Rahman, Coordinator of the Bil'in Land Defense and Popular Committee, told Poloffs that the GoI has taken no steps to reroute the separation barrier between Bil'in and the settlement of Modi'in Illit following a September 7 Israeli High Court ruling. He said Bil'in residents will not appeal the High Court decision, but will follow up through attorney Michael Sfard. Abu Rahman said he was beaten by settlers January 1 while protesting the placement of two caravans on Bil'in residents' land in Mattityahu East enclave. He said Bil'in residents continue to demonstrate weekly to protest the separation barrier. End Summary.

Barrier Not Yet Rerouted

[1](#)2. (C) Abdallah Abu Rahman, Coordinator of the Bil'in Land Defense and Popular Committee, told Poloffs January 24 that the GoI has not moved to reroute the separation barrier between Bil'in and Modi'in Illit settlement following a September 7 Israeli High Court ruling (reftels B and C). Abu Rahman welcomed the ruling that will restore between 1,100 dunums (275 acres) and 1,600 dunums (395 acres) of Bil'in's land, but said the victory is incomplete because only part of the village's land was returned. Abu Rahman stressed that the situation on the ground has not changed since the ruling. (Note: According to the High Court decision, the GoI must prepare, within reasonable time, a proposal for an alternative route that leaves Bil'in's lands east of the barrier. End Note). Abu Rahman reported that a barrier gate allowing Bil'in residents access to their 2,300 dunums (575 acres) of land and 15,000 olive trees is open a maximum of fourteen hours a day (6 am - 8 pm). However, he said, IDF soldiers are frequently absent for short periods throughout the day, which strands Bil'in residents on one side. Abu Rahman said Bil'in residents will not appeal the High Court decision, but will follow up with the GoI through attorney Michael Sfard. He added that since January 1, Modi'in Illit settlers uprooted twenty olive trees belonging to Bil'in residents.

Demonstrations Continue

[1](#)3. (C) Abu Rahman said despite the High Court ruling, approximately 150 Bil'in residents continue to demonstrate every Friday along the separation barrier, often with some 100 Israeli and international human rights activists. Abu

Rahman told Poloffs he was wounded in the head by a rubber bullet fired by an IDF soldier at the demonstration three weeks before. Residents will continue their weekly demonstrations in their campaign of peaceful resistance against the barrier, he said.

#### Mattityahu East Caravans

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¶4. (C) Abu Rahman told Poloffs that on January 1, upon observing settlers from Mattityahu East enclave (part of Modi'in Illit settlement) unloading two caravans on Bil'in land, he and Bil'in activist Muhammad al-Khatib stood beneath the crane in protest of the caravans. According to Abu Rahman, twenty settlers approached the two Palestinians beneath the crane and beat them. Peace Now activists present at the scene filmed the beating, and Border Police, who arrived shortly after, detained several settlers. Abu Rahman reported that the settlers were released just half an hour later and on January 2, the caravans were removed and Modi'in Illit Mayor Ya'akov Gutterman called to apologize for the settlers' behavior. Separately, Mayor Gutterman told Poloff that the caravans were brought by "troublemakers from outside the settlement" and the incident was "embarrassing." (Note: Modi'in Illit is an ultra-orthodox settlement -- not an "ideological settlement" -- and generally does not use caravans. End Note). Abu Rahman told Poloffs that fifteen Bil'in families own some of the land where Mattityahu East sits.

#### Unemployment on the Rise

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¶5. (C) Abu Rahman told Poloffs that Bil'in (pop: 1,500)

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suffers from high unemployment due to the fifty-meter wide separation barrier that separates residents from 57.5 percent or 2,300 dunums (575 acres) of their land. (Note: With the court ordered rerouting of the barrier, residents could still be separated from 17.5 percent or 700 dunums (175 acres). End Note). He said until the second Intifada in 2000, half of Bil'in's male residents worked in Israel, but in recent years, the separation barrier and restrictions on Palestinians entering Israel, has caused unemployment to skyrocket. Abu Rahman added that of the 1700 dunums (425 acres) on the east side of the barrier, Bil'in residents have access to only 1300 dunums (325 acres) due to the 200 meter buffer zone created by the IDF along the separation barrier.

DUFFY